support to a limited extent to the State Agricultural Universities for coordinated research, strengthening and development of agricultural education.

Coverage area of Bt. Cotton

1286. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has now become a major player in the transgenic crops by achieving coverage area of 50,000 hectares;

(b) whether it is also a fact that India has hiked its Bt. Cotton coverage area by 400 per cent between 2002-04;

(c) if so, in what way India is planning to galvanise the global biotech crop market in the next three years; and

(d) whether a study has been made to find out the benefits of Bt. Cotton to Indian farmers, if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons, therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The Government, through the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in the Ministry of Environment & Forests had accorded approval only for one transgenic crop i.e. Bt. Cotton for commercial cultivation in India. The area under Bt. Cotton has increased from 0.70 lakh acres in Kharif-2002 to 2.30 lakh acres in Kharif-2003 and further increased to 12.00 lakh acres in Kharif-2004.

(c) The Department had set up a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan to formulate a long term policy on Application of Biotechnology in Agriculture. The Task Force had submitted its report which has been examined in the Department. On the basis of Inter-ministerial consultations on the recommendations of the Task Force the Department has decided ten priorities given in the statement. (See below).

(d) On the directions of the Government of India, the monitoring committees have been set up in all the cotton growing States to assess the performance of Bt. Cotton. From the reports received from the State Governments, it was observed that the performance of Bt. Cotton was satisfactory and farmers have derived economic benefits due to reduction in insecticides applications.

Statement

Priorities for Agri-Biotechnology

1. Finalisation of National Biotech Policy by the Department of Biotechnology.
2. Rationalisation of approval process under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 as suggested by Prof. M.S. Swaminathan's Task Force.
3. Release of Bt. Cotton varieties for North Zone.
4. Post-release monitoring to be started by Department of Agriculture & Cooperation and Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
5. Capacity building for post-release monitoring and training.
6. Public awareness campaign to be launched by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation in association with State Agricultural Universities and other scientific organizations/institutes.
7. Finalising combined strategy for arresting spread of non-approved Bt. Cotton seeds.
8. Developing the testing facilities for Genetically Modified seeds.
9. To finalise Action Plan for the components relating to Agri-biotechnology in the National Biotech Policy.
10. Identification of crops and traits for use of application of biotechnology.

Loans and credits for deep sea fishing

1287. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to help the deep sea fishing industry;